

A TAXONOMIC NOTE ON LASIODISCUS (RHAMNACEAE)

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Lasiodiscus ferrugineus Verdc. has been treated either as a distinct species (Verdcourt, 1957; Dale & Greenway, 1961; Gillett & McDonald, 1970; Johnston, 1972) or as a synonym of L. mildbraedii Engl. (Drummond, 1966). Johnston (1972), while maintaining L. ferrugineus as a species, noted that it might not merit specific rank, although he considered it worthy of recognition at some taxonomic level.

Lasiodiscus ferrugineus has been separated from L. mildbraedii solely on the basis of the former's longer pubescence on the young shoots (Verdcourt, 1957; Johnston, 1972). Herbarium specimens are otherwise virtually indistinguishable. However, the capsules and seeds of L. ferrugineus are undescribed. These are present in a recent collection of the author: KENYA, K7, Lamu District, Witu Forest, ca. 1.5 km NW of Mambosasa Game Forest Post, ca. 2°22'S, 40°33'E, 5-15 m alt., lowland evergreen forest with Manilkara sansibarensis dominant, other trees noted were Euphorbia tanaënsis, Cola sp., Ficus cf. bussei, Tamarindus indica, Vitex sp., Cassipourea euryoides; understory shrubs were Grandidiera boivinii, Rinorea ilicifolia, Allophylus pervillei, Lasiodiscus mildbraedii, Asteranthe asterias, Mallotus oppositifolius, Mildbraedia carpinifolia, 19 July 1974, Faden & Faden 74/1141 (EA, K, MO): shrub 4-5 m tall, flowers white; common. They may be described as follows: capsules depressed globose, 11-15 mm in diameter, greensih-brown, densely puberulous, 3-seeded, seeds ovoid, beige with minute darker spots and streaks, 7-7.5 mm long, 6-7 mm wide.

The capsules and seeds of L. ferrugineus are very similar in size, form and pubescence to those of specimens of L. mildbraedii in the East African Herbarium. The capsules of Faden & Faden 74/1141 agree with the dimensions given for L. mildbraedii by Drummond (1966) but are significantly greater than those reported by Johnston (1972) for the same species. Perhaps the discrepancies are due to different methods of measurement. Suffice it to say, the capsules and seeds of L. ferrugineus are so similar to those of L. mildbraedii that they support Drummond's treatment of the two as conspecific. The constant difference in shoot pubescence and allopatric distributions indicate that L. ferrugineus merits recognition as a subspecies of L. mildbraedii. The following combination is required.

- Lasiodiscus mildbraedii Engl. subsp. ferrugineus (Verdc.)  
Faden, stat. nov.  
Lasiodiscus ferrugineus Verdc., Bull. Jard. Bot. État. 27: 362,  
1957.

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